



UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

REIMAGINING MUSLIM SPACES

Civic engagement is an increasingly important way to enhance the participation of Muslims in wider American society and to help combat Islamophobia and misinformation. How can American mosques promote civic engagement?

CASE STUDY: Muslim Community Association (MCA) Santa Clara, CA

MCA at a Glance:

- Among the largest mosques in the country
- Offers an array of facilities and services
- Regularly hosts civic engagement programs that fall under three broad categories:



Electoral Politics



Neighborhood Outreach



Community Development

Mosques promote civic engagement when they take steps to encourage or facilitate the Muslim community's participation in civic life, including . . .



Political Involvement



Community Service



Issue-Based Activism



Civic Education

What lessons can other communities learn from MCA about promoting civic engagement?

1. Prioritize Civic Engagement

Leaders at MCA identified civic engagement as a core element of the institution's mission and made it a central component of their organizational culture. This prioritization has encouraged civic engagement initiatives to blossom.

2. Build Effective Partnerships

Rather than try to do everything alone, MCA consciously supported organizations like the Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and partnered with other Muslim organizations to focus on civic engagement issues.

3. Maintain a Clear Vision

For MCA, a clear vision for civic engagement proved more important than a big budget. Identifying clear, manageable goals for civic engagement allowed leaders to make strides in their community even in light of their financial limitations.

4. Maximize Participation and Inclusion

MCA has worked to accommodate a wide spectrum of Islamic views, as long as they are within the parameters of mainstream Islam. This inclusive, "big tent" approach has helped MCA enjoy growing support for civic engagement efforts.

5. Empower and Utilize the Community

MCA has taken measures to harness the talent of its diverse support base. By providing platforms and encouraging entrepreneurship, MCA empowers its congregation and utilizes its community's resources.